

Lemhi Forest Restoration Group

Upper North Fork Project

Multi-Party Monitoring Sub-committee Meeting

March 5, 2015

ACTION ITEMS EMPHASIZED IN CAPITALS

Attendees: Jim Roscoe, Bob Cope, Lynn Bennett, Beth Waterbury, Rob Mason, Michelle Tucker, Gina Knudson, Louise Wagenknecht, Doug Leyva, Gary Power. Call-in: Jim Tucker, Dani Mazotta, Ken Gebhardt

Issues identified in Upper North Fork recommendation memo as updated April 2012

The group reviewed the memorandum issues presented by the LFRG to the SCNF in 2012

- Mixed-severity cold forest – different age classes, diversity of species (aspen, whitebark pine, high elevation meadows)
- Establish strategic fuel breaks
- Temporary road construction in Roadless
- Riparian habitat
- Old growth
- Weeds
- Habitat connectivity to support wildlife security

Principles set forward in the recommendation memo included:

- Monitor and document project results
- Tell story of our successes
- Specifically highlight wildlife enhancement
- Multiparty monitoring
- Economic development: local utilization, stewardship contracting

2015 Implementation Schedule

Ken reviewed the proposed implementation schedule, Doug pointed out units on the map

- Stateline Sale, 380 acres, possibly including meadow restoration
- True North Sale, 300 acres, SW of Lost Trail (marking in 2015)
- Twin Creek Campground, 50 acres
- Fuels thinning behind Moose Creek Estates
- Aspen stand across from Royal Elk Ranch along highway 93, 10 acres
- Lick Creek, 200 acres, pre commercial thin
- Joint chiefs NRCS & FS, will locate treatment units (estimated 110-170 acres) in cooperation w/ NRCS & Lemhi County. Private property is mostly at lower elevations. Has to be obligated July 1.

Other notes on implementation:

- Doug – If we offer 200 acres at a time, that will attract larger contractors from OR and WA and we can get better bids.
- Doug - Whitebark pine restoration will be opportunistic (unit 36). Most will be across from Chief Joseph. These are healthy stands, no blister rust.

Monitoring Considerations:

- Michelle – Limited budget requires focused strategy.

- Cope – Make sure to establish desired future condition. Be really specific about what you are doing so you can monitor progress. Objectives should not be amorphous.
- Beth – Each objective should have SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic, Time-bound).
- Michelle – This is our first project in mixed severity forest project. Upper North Fork lessons can help inform Jesse Creek and other projects
- Jim R - Are we only focusing on implementation units or are we looking at broader trends, i.e. climate? Is the habitat connectivity going to be in place for the long term in the face of climate change?
- Gina -- Hughes Creel Multi Party Monitoring could be reviewed for lessons learned. Multi-party monitoring included old growth stand exams, weed monitoring, aspen monitoring, pre-and post-treatment monitoring.

Partner Monitoring Priorities

The group was asked to list their priorities for multi-party monitoring in the project area:

Ken – FS is counting on our partners to accomplish some of our implementation monitoring. Especially whitebark pine, aspen.

Beth – Memo lends itself to effectiveness monitoring, this is part of FS responsibility. Habitat monitoring makes more sense than wildlife population monitoring, given resources. Whitebark pine, aspen, old growth structure, canopy cover, vegetation variables. We can rely on existing data sets. Reality is that Upper North Fork makes up 1% of IDFG management responsibility in Upper Salmon. State is prioritizing species of greatest conservation need, in the process of ranking. Won't be done until May of 2015. (This is in conjunction with the Forest Planning Rule).

Dani – Old growth habitat. Temp roads. Whitebark pine.

Rob – Habitat Connectivity. Specific habitats that are more vulnerable to climate change. Would like to see data that has been collected on connectivity be overlaid on this project area.

Beth – Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative webinar on whitebark pine restoration techniques concluded that in our eco-region whitebark pine is likely to be resilient to climate change. Connectivity data available is really coarse. Efforts underway to refine data.

Cope – What can we do with funding available? What is out there that doesn't cost you anything? Can we use LANDFIRE, is water quality data available. Who already has data?

Gary – 30,000 foot view. Makes sense to look at habitat as opposed to specific species. We are receiving recognition from Hughes Creek success, and that should help us get funding and continue to build credibility.

Michelle – Mixed severity. Large wildfires are driving collaborative engagement in mixed severity. Penny Morgan, U of Idaho, has graduate student doing work on this subject. Rocky Mountain Research Station is modeling in Jesse Creek project area.

Lynn – Working in high elevations isn't new (lodgepole clear cuts, fire in mixed severity).

Doug – Difference for mixed severity now is objective of restoration and fuel reduction, rather than timber production.

Michelle – Mixed severity isn't an area like dry Douglas fire where there is consensus for treatment and effectiveness for protecting communities at risk from larger fires or impacts to wildlife. It is important to document lessons learned in Upper North Fork. MICHELLE WILL SEND GROUP INFORMATION FROM BEND AND BOISE CONFERENCES ON THIS TOPIC.

Jim R. – Where are we able to maintain some of the characteristics important to wildlife? We should be able to infer from Mustang Fire what we can anticipate to happen in our project area. Climate, where are we seeing potential for large shifts in populations? Clark nutcracker example.

Beth – Requires a baseline. Would be really intensive monitoring and may be beyond this group's scope and budget.

Consensus for Monitoring

Michelle reviewed the main themes presented by the group and asked the group to strategize and consider a monitoring approach.

Whitebark Pine

- Laura Lowery from FS Forest Health has data and has been working on whitebark in Idaho
- Monitoring Protocol has been established
- Student Conservation Association collected data along Anderson Mountain Road (DOUG WILL GET INFO TO COMMITTEE). They used quick plot stand exams and noted Clark nutcracker occurrence
- IDFG botanist (Lynn Kinter) has been doing whitebark pine work across the state, improving LANDFIRE layer where it relates to whitebark pine
- SVS has some photo points of whitebark pine along Anderson Mountain Road
- Michelle presented a whitebark pine vegetation map given to SVS a few years ago by the SCNF. Difficult to determine extent of whitebark pine in project area.
- Doug - We don't have pure whitebark pine stands. We can look at relative abundance.
- Whitebark monitoring doesn't necessarily need to be compared to baseline.
 - Whitebark Working Group – Beth, Doug, SVS

Aspen

- Stand that will be improved across from Royal Elk Ranch is healthy. 10 acre stand next to highway may have limited wildlife value.
- Central ID aspen working group is interested in adding to the database.
- Possibilities of disturbance releasing old clones.
- Hughes Creek aspen monitoring data might be able to be extrapolated.
- Even though aspen is not abundant the group would like to consider monitoring at some level as this is such an important wildlife species (Gary - mule deer)
 - Aspen Group: Michelle, Louise, Jim R., IDFG (Jessie Shallow)

Meadows

- SVS took photo points in 4 cardinal directions and a brief narrative of each identified meadow in 2013
- Group decided that w/ photo points and implementation monitoring, no additional monitoring is necessary at this time

Connectivity

- NAPE photography, satellite imagery can be quantified year-to-year or 5 year intervals
- Implementation monitoring for patch design
- Habitat spatial arrangement on landscape
- Road density
- SCNF has data from EIS regarding connectivity analysis that they can share with the group.
- Looking at connectivity is a big task. The group agreed to look at existing data and consider if there is more that may be considered given limited resources.
 - Connectivity Group: Rob, Beth, Ken, Jim R

Implementation

- Best Management Practices monitoring would include weeds, prescription, compaction at landings, etc.
- FS is already responsible for BMP monitoring, what can the group look at to supplement or address areas of concern to emphasize project goals have been met
 - Implementation Group: Dani, Toni

Mixed severity cold forest

- Penny Morgan has a grad student interested in looking at this issue. Focus would probably be fire behavior.
- This was addressed in presentation from Richy Herrod, Bill Gaines and Penny and in our workshops and field trips in 2013.
- Michelle will have follow up conversation w/ Penny, and send research to group for review.

Next steps:

Each group will provide a summary of their findings by April 17, 2015.

- MICHELLE WILL SEND A TEMPLATE TO EACH GROUP FOR REPORTING OBJECTIVES, RESOURCES REQUIRED, AND POSSIBLE FUNDING FOR EACH ISSUE.
- National Forest Foundation has a grant cycle in June that may be a good candidate for funding some of these projects

Follow Up for Issue Groups

Issues Recommendations Template – Please address the following and submit to SVS by April 17, 2015.

It is recommended that each team briefly review the final EIS for the Upper North Fork Project by issue. You can use the electronic document to search by topic here: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=33793>

1. Issue
2. Group Participants
3. Status of Issue in Project Area (List anything pertinent, if you don't know, say it)
4. Available Data (Include type, how and where to acquire if possible)
5. Existing protocols
6. What we want to know, document or don't know about this issue relative to the Upper North Fork Project
7. Recommended Objective(s) for multi-party monitoring in Upper North Fork Project Area
8. Funding options/opportunities